

CHANGE ME, O LORD

Please open your Bibles to Philippians chapter three and verse twelve. I would like to preach a message entitled "Change Me, O Lord!"

Brethren! Do you have a desire to do the right thing, but you don't seem to have the spiritual strength with which to do it? I do not know about you, but I want my character to be different. I am not asking for a softer bed or an easier life. I am asking for a practical change in my life.

So let me ask you something! Don't you want the same thing? Don't you want some sort of change in your life? Don't you want your character to be different? Don't you want your sin nature defeated? Don't you want things to improve with your children? Don't you want things to be better in your home, in your marriage? Don't you want to be delivered from some binding habit or some dominating sin? Don't you want victory over anger, lust, jealousy, greed or any number of things? Don't you want meaning, purpose, and direction for your life? Don't you want a practical change in your life?

You say, Preacher! I want some sort of change in my life. I want my character to be different. I want my sin nature defeated. I want a closer walk with Jesus Christ. I want a practical change in my life.

Listen! You ought to be content with your circumstances in life – that is Biblical and correct. However, there ought to be a desire to change, a desire to be better, a desire to improve.

In Philippians 3:12, the Apostle Paul says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

What is Paul saying? Paul is saying this. I want my character to be different. I want to have a greater walk with Jesus Christ. Change me, O Lord!

We are going to notice three things: number one, how change begins; number two, how change continues; and then number three, how change is completed.

Please notice number one, how change begins. Change begins by the new birth.

I am not going to presume that every listener in this room has been born again. The only way you can be born again is to personally accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

Let me ask you something. Are you saved? Are you born again? In John 3:7, Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

It is true my friend. Change begins by the new birth. You say, "Preacher! What must I do to be born again?" You need to exercise faith in the gospel message. In I Corinthians 15:3-4, the Apostle Paul wrote, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

When a man hears the gospel (and that is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ) and with a repentant heart receives that gospel as the only hope of his salvation, that man is saved. In Acts 3:19, the Bible says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." In Acts 17:30, the Bible says, "...God commandeth all men every where to repent." This repentance is a change of mind that agrees with God that one is a sinner. In Romans 5:12, it says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And also agrees with what Christ did for us on Calvary's cross some 2,000 years ago. He became our substitute. In II Corinthians 5:21, the Bible says, "For he [God] hath made him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Salvation is as simple as believe on Christ. In John 1:12, the Bible says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." To believe on Christ is to receive Christ. To receive Christ is to believe on Christ. It is simply believe on Christ as the one who bore your sin, who died in your place, who was buried, and whom God resurrected from the dead.

In Romans 10:9-10, the Bible says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In Romans 10:13, the Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

That's the gospel! That's the good news! That's the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If it is believed, it will transform hell-bound sinners, who are lost and without hope, into the children of Almighty God; and if you are going to be saved today, you will be saved by simply believing what the Bible says about the death of Jesus Christ. You will be saved by simply believing what the Bible says about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith is not some sort of experience that you have first and then you believe. Faith is simply believing God's Word. Faith is simply taking God at His Word, simply trusting God.

The Bible teaches that you can be changed. In II Corinthians 5:17, the Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [a new creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Don't misunderstand this verse. This verse is not telling you that once you are saved you are home free and that everything is going to go smoothly until you die and go to heaven. That is not true. That is not what Paul is teaching here at all.

The Apostle Paul is talking about a different kind of quality of life.

When you received Jesus Christ as your Saviour, God began a vast change in you. Old things are passed away. That is the old way of thinking, the old motivations, and the old impulses to live for yourself. Those become old, not that they cease, but they become old when compared to this brand new kind of life that has begun in you.

Question! Are you a Christian? Are you saved? If you are not saved, you do not have the real power to change; but if you are truly born again, you have unlimited power within your experience of change.

Does that mean that every true believer is never bothered again by the old life? No!

I am simply saying this. If you are truly saved, there is within you something brand new. You have within you the Holy Spirit of God.

In Ephesians 4:30, the Bible says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." In I Corinthians 3:16, it says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Don't you see? You have the Holy Spirit of God living in you today as a child of God, and all the things that can be attached to the flesh are called old. They have passed away under the judgment of God.

Therefore, you have the potential to be changed, to be what God Almighty wants you to be. Without the new birth, there is no hope for a practical change in our life; however with the new birth, there is all sorts of hope for the future.

In Philippians 2:12, Paul writes, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Does that mean that everybody should work out their own plan, come up with their own scheme? No! It is just the opposite. The word "work out" is the same word used by a mathematician who works out a problem. He applies truth and comes to a conclusion.

You see, when you receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour, there is something begun in you that is the work of God; and as you yield to the Holy Spirit of God, that thing gets worked out in your life.

If you are truly born again, change has begun and has the potential of continuing.

No wonder Jesus called conversion the new birth. In John chapter three, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "...Ye must be born again." That is a new life. That is a new beginning. That is conversion.

Therefore, change begins with conversion. If you have never received Jesus Christ, if you have never been born again, you need to accept Jesus Christ.

However, if you have accepted Jesus Christ, whether you realize it or not, change has already begun in your life.

We have noticed number one, how change begins, but notice number two, how change continues.

Change begins at conversion, and change continues as you yield to the Holy Spirit of God and read the Word of God.

In II Corinthians 3:18, the Bible says, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

This is the story of Moses going up to Mount Sinai, being in the presence of God, coming down from Mount Sinai. His face was so bright, so brilliant that they had to put a veil over his face so that the Jews could stand to have Moses in their presence.

Paul, under inspiration, took that historical fact and made a spiritual application. He said there are some today who, like Moses, still have their faces veiled. They don't quite see all the things they ought to see. They don't quite grasp spiritual things so their faces are veiled; or as Paul says, their heart is veiled.

You see, if you have not been saved, you have no potential for change. You still have the veil over your heart and mind. You cannot see spiritual things.

That's Biblical! In I Corinthians 2:14, the Bible says, "But the natural man... (You could say "the unsaved man" here and do no harm to Scripture because the natural man is an unsaved man.) And the Bible goes on to say that he "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." What is the Bible saying? The Bible is saying this: The natural man does not grasp, comprehend, or understand spiritual truth because spiritual truth is spiritually discerned. That's the natural man. He needs to be saved; he needs to be born again in order to grasp, comprehend, and understand spiritual truth.

But if you have been saved, the Bible says the veil has been removed.

In II Corinthians 3:18, the Bible says, "But we [in contrast to the unsaved], we all, with open face [that is unveiled face], because we have accepted Jesus Christ, we have had the veil removed.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord..." Beholding what? The glass? No! It does not say that. "Beholding as in a glass."

What is it that we behold? He said we all with open face behold the glory of the Lord.

This glass here is referring to a piece of brass that has been polished to such a degree that it becomes a mirror.

This mirror does not reveal ourselves. It is as if this mirror is tilted away from us and catches the image of something else. It catches the image of the Lord. We behold the glory of the Lord.

What do you suppose that mirror is? It says "as in a glass." It symbolizes or pictures the Word of God. Often the Bible refers to itself as a mirror. Sometimes it is a mirror to reflect our own image, that we might see ourselves as God does. But here it is not a mirror reflecting our own image; it is a mirror reflecting God's image.

Now what is the glory of the Lord? The glory of the Lord are those things, qualities, attributes about God that make Him worthy of our honour, reverence, fear, and respect.

We behold the glory of the Lord. It does not mean we behold His brilliance. In I John 4:12, the Bible says, "No man hath seen God at any time. If God somehow came into this room today, the room would disintegrate at the sheer glory of His presence.

So when it says behold the glory of the Lord, it is not talking about beholding the majesty of His bodily presence.

It is talking about His Character. We behold His Character, those qualities about God that make Him to be loved, honored, and respected

Do you know what the Bible is saying? It is simply saying this. As you read the Bible, you behold the glory of the Lord. You begin to behold the character of God.

So let me ask you something. Do you know where you can see the character of God? You can see the character of God in the Bible.

You can read about God in the Bible, which is a mirror of the glory of the Lord. And as you read the Bible, you will be amazed as you read about His love, mercy, and grace, and even harsh and stern judgment.

Brethren! You are changed as you behold the glory of the Lord. It is talking about an inward change. In other words, we become more and more Christ-like by the Spirit of the Lord.

What does this verse teach? It simply teaches you that the way you can be changed is to read the Bible.

You need to go to church where you can hear the Word of God preached. You need to go to church where you can behold the glory of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit of God will take the Word of God and change you day by day, slowly, gradually into the same image of God. He will make you more and more like Jesus Christ.

It is no accident either that the Devil does everything in his power to keep you from the Word of God, from its preaching, its teaching or its personal reading. That is not an accident. The Devil understands that you are changed as you yield to the Holy Spirit of God and read the Word of God. He knows that.

You yield yourself to the Holy Spirit of God and read the Bible daily and come to church faithfully, and see if there does not develop in your life a change of character.

I talk with people from time to time who have all kinds of problems, and I know what they want me to do. They want me to pray a little prayer and make all their problems go away, make all the heartache and pain disappear, and say everything will be all right again. It does not work that way.

Do you know how it works? Here is the advice you give people, and they do not like it. You say, let us get into the Bible together. Let us go to church faithfully; and whenever God tells you to do something, you do it. They want something else.

You want some medicine you can take and everything will be okay. It does not work that way. The only way you can be changed into the same image is as you behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass. That is what the Bible teaches.

If you want some sort of change in your life, then do not lay aside your Bible. Read the Bible. Read it carefully. Read it yieldingly to the Holy Spirit of God. Make yourself available to God to let the Holy Spirit of God use His Word to plow up your heart and mind and change you.

Listen! If you are truly born again you ought to see some spiritual improvement in your life. Okay, ask yourself, what made the difference? The Bible has made the difference.

I cannot tell you how it works, but I know it works. God says it does, and I have experienced it in my own life.

Brethren! If you lay aside your Bible and miss church you will begin to see your life backslide. You will not be like Christ. You will be more and more unlike Christ.

But if you will read the Word of God daily looking at what it says and yielding to what is there, coming to the house of God faithfully and listening to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, you know what? You will begin to change and improve and mature and develop.

You go ahead and don't read the Bible if you do not want to. You go ahead and miss church if you want to, but do not expect change for the better. Do not expect improvement. Do not expect your marriage to be better. Do not expect your life to be better. Do not expect your spiritual life to improve. It is not going to improve. It is going to get worse.

Listen, if you are going to be changed, it involves the new birth; it involves beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass. But notice number three, change is completed when Jesus Christ returns at the rapture of the church.

In Philippians 3:20-21, the Bible says, "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

This is an outward change, different from the inward change. This is on the outside. This has to do with our bodies. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

Does that mean that we will all become mirror images of Jesus? Does that mean we will all have the same color hair He does? The same color skin He does? The same height, same physical appearance He does?

Is that what that means? No! It is simply saying this. We are going to be like Jesus Christ in that our body will be like His body. That is, His body was immortal. We will have an immortal body. We will have an immortal body not Earth-bound.

We will be like Him. Won't it be wonderful when we are like Jesus Christ, and we don't have sin dwelling within us? Never lose our temper? Never are jealous? Never think an evil thought? Never are lazy? Never need to be motivated? What a wonderful day that will be when finally, by the grace of God, we are changed outwardly so that our body is like His body immortal! Our body like His body, not Earth-bound! Our body like His body, without the presence of sin! Our body like His body, no diseases, no death, and no decay! One of these days, we will be changed. One of these days, we will be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

If that be true and it is then that ought to have a practical impact on the here and now don't you think?

In Romans 8:11-13, the Bible says, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

That is talking about that wonderful day when we shall be changed completely. What is Paul saying? He is simply saying this. If you are going to be changed by and by, out yonder, in the future; and your body is going to give way to immortality and perfection. Then why in the world do you pay and debts to the flesh nature now?

If you are going to be changed in the by and by, why don't you live like a Christian in the here and now?

That's what Paul is saying. You do not owe your flesh any allegiance. You do not owe your flesh any devotion. Then why in the world do you yield yourself to the impulses of the flesh?

In Romans 13:14, the Bible says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." What is the Bible saying? It is simply saying this: Make no room for the flesh.

In Philippians 3:3, the Bible says, "Have no confidence in the flesh." In Titus 2:12-13, the Bible says, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

In I John 2:28, John writes, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Brethren, you are not going to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ unashamed by accident. If you stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ unashamed, it will be because, at some point in your Christian life, you have determined that is exactly how you are going to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Living for Christ and doing what is right does not happen by accident. It will only happen as you determine by God's grace that is exactly what you are going to do.

Just think! One of these days you are going to stand before Jesus Christ, God's Son, and give Him an account of how you lived your life before Him from the very moment you embraced Him as your Personal Savior and Friend until the day you die. The Bible is very clear on this! In Hebrews 9:27, it says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." In Romans 14:10,

the Bible says, "...we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." In Romans 14:10, it says, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Don't you want some sort of change in your life? Don't you want your character to be different? Don't you want your sin nature defeated? Don't you want things to improve with your children? Don't you want things to be better in your home, in your marriage? Don't you want to be delivered from some binding habit or some dominating sin? Don't you want victory over anger, lust, jealousy, greed or any number of things? Don't you want meaning, purpose, and direction for your life? Don't you want a practical change in your life?

You ought to thank God that you can be changed. Change begins with the new birth. It continues as you yield to the Holy Spirit of God under the authority and rule and guidance of the Word of God, and it will be complete at the rapture of the church.

Change Me O Lord!

How is a Person Saved?

Salvation is all of God. God does the saving. Just take God at His Word and claim His salvation by faith. You will never be able to work your way into heaven. God does not have a scale in heaven whereby He weighs your good and bad works. That is a lie of the Devil. Romans 3:24; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:18; Romans 5:8.

Salvation is as simple as believing on Christ as the one who bore your sin, who died in your place, who was buried, and whom God resurrected from the dead. John 1:12, 3:16, 6:47; Acts 16:31; II Corinthians 5:21; Romans 10:9-10; Romans 10:13.

Simply admit that you are a sinner and believe on Christ as your crucified, buried, and risen Saviour. You will receive forgiveness for all of your sins. You will receive His free gift of eternal life by faith. Romans 3:10, 23; I Corinthians 15:3-4.

Jesus did a wonderful thing for you some 2,000 years ago on Calvary's cross. He died for you. He was buried for you. He rose again the third day for you, and nothing would thrill Him more than to save you today.

Won't you go to Him right now in prayer and tell Him in your own words that you will trust Him as your Saviour? Or pray this simple prayer: Dear Lord, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died for me and that He arose from the grave. Here and now I ask You to forgive me of my sin and save me. In Jesus's name. Amen.

If you prayed that simple prayer, I would like to hear from you. Please contact me by e-mail or phone (813) 760-4028.

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